

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Stillwater Academy
11175 South Redwood Road
South Jordan, Utah 84095**

July 20, 2005



**Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
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**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Stillwater Academy
11175 South Redwood Road
South Jordan, Utah 84095**

July 20, 2005

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, July 20, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Stillwater Academy is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Marilyn Prettyman is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Stillwater Academy, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Stillwater Academy.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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1/3/2005

STILLWATER ACADEMY

Board of Directors

Lee Caldwell Director of Stillwater-Turnabout, Owner, and Board Member
Codee Marshall Board Member
Jeff Claunch Board Member
Lloyd Atkinson Board Member
Don Caldwell Board Member

Executive Parent Committee

Vicky Porter Member
Diane Snarr Member
Sue Lloyd Member

Academic Administration

Dr. Marilyn Prettyman Academic Director of Stillwater
Lisa Finlinson Registrar of Stillwater

Faculty

Nancy Hedrick Social Studies, Financial Literacy
Kelli Hansen English
Adrienne Noakes Science
Susan Briggs Health
Rod Buhler Computer Technology
Christina Hilton Physical Education
Alan Layton Mathematics
Sheri Sturdevant Art
Marne Denos Visual Communications, Journalism
Jeanne Apple Special Education
Beverly Crawford Substitute Teacher, Transition Specialist
Bill Gillingham Substitute Teacher

*Please note: **Stillwater** is the name of the academic program at Stillwater-Turnabout.
Turnabout is the name of the therapeutic program.

STILLWATER ACADEMY

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of Stillwater Academy to
Support the emotional growth of students,
Build confidence in their ability to meet academic standards and goals, and
Inspire a love of learning.
(Acronym: SBI)

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Student learning is the chief priority of the school.
- Students learn in different ways and should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches to support their learning.
- Each student is a valued individual with unique physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs.
- Exceptional students (e.g., special education, limited English proficiency, talented and gifted, etc.) require special services and resources.
- A safe and physically comfortable environment promotes student learning.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Ralph P. Vander Heide, Ph.D., Consultant in School Accreditation, Visiting Team
Chairperson

Judith H. Vander Heide, Consultant in School Accreditation

VISITING TEAM REPORT

STILLWATER ACADEMY

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Turnabout Treatment Program has been helping young people for the past 20 years. Beginning in a small house in Holladay, the program has grown through a facility on 20th East in Salt Lake City, until today it is housed at a new site in South Jordan, Utah. In its earliest days, Turnabout was limited to a treatment program with no school component. Students who reached a certain level in their treatment were allowed to attend their local school. Later, Turnabout contracted with the Granite School District to work with the students through Turnabout's Home and Hospital program, and then contracted with Woodland Hills to provide a packet-based program. Stillwater Academy was created in 1998 as a fully functioning school offering a full academic curriculum to help the students reach their goal of graduation or return to their regular high school. The 20th East facility was not as conducive to learning as the faculty and staff wanted, leading to the decision to purchase the former South Jordan City Hall and convert it into the present modern and comfortable school site.

The Turnabout Program has five levels of growth for the students. Although therapists work with many students who have behavioral and emotional issues, they do not work with those who are deeply troubled, or with court adjudicated students requiring a lock-down facility. Students are housed with foster parents in their individual homes. Privileges depend upon a student's level of trust and responsibility. Parents house students who are not their own children, allowing these "parents" to practice parenting skills without the emotional issues which could occur with their own children. As students make progress, they earn the privilege of returning to being housed in their own homes. Stillwater, therefore, has a high degree of parent involvement, participation, and support.

The primary focus of both Turnabout and Stillwater is the emotional well being of the students. The school supports all aspects of the treatment program. Even the desired results for student learning (DRSLs) were selected based on both the academic and emotional needs of students. School is a very good laboratory for the students to practice the behaviors and socialization skills they are working on in their treatment program.

Stakeholders believe it is the partnership of Turnabout and Stillwater that prepares the students to confront their individual issues and gain the tools with which they can move on to experiencing purposeful and successful lives.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The school discovered significant findings about each student, since each is carefully profiled in order to individualize instruction to the extent possible and to help students with their psychological and behavioral issues. The faculty members were surprised when they learned of the low intelligence/ability scores (results of the WISC-IV) of the students upon entry into Stillwater, because the performance of students tended to indicate higher abilities. Indeed, retesting prior to graduation of students identified for special education does reveal a significant increase in intelligence/ability levels.

The faculty and administration concluded that students tested upon entry are in crisis, and after receiving therapy and being taught in small classes, they are at a high point in their lives. The result is much-improved scores. Test results for some students are given in the self-study.

The self-study points out that “National measures of student performance such as Stillwater Academy’s are generally unavailable to us. Such tests as may have been taken are often very low. The tests may reflect the student when they were using drugs or alcohol or were involved in severe emotional crisis.” The school’s study does, however, list much data on student performance, intelligence, and abilities, as well as student demographics, gender ratios, ethnic representation, and parental involvement.

The Visiting Team notes that Stillwater adequately portrays the school population, environment, curriculum, and other relevant information about the school, with emphasis on its mission, philosophy, and educational and rehabilitative direction for each student.

The school’s analysis of the profile includes the identification of its strengths and limitations, and for the most part it provides a description of the “big picture” about the performance of the school. Profile information was used in drafting the school’s improvement plan.

The Visiting Team notes that in preparing the profile the school followed the guidelines of the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) and the NSSE handbook, *School Improvement: Focusing on Student Performance*, as well as the Utah accreditation handbook, *Collaborating for Student Achievement*. NSSE opinion surveys were used.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The Visiting Team commends the profile information that is given. However, the school is reminded to put its best foot forward and to profile thoroughly. The Visiting Team proposes that, in future self-studies, more information be given on follow-up studies or other evidence of the endeavors of students after leaving Stillwater. Then, too, student activities such as dances, service projects, ranch

work, etc., were hardly mentioned in the report—yet the Visiting Team learned that these activities are a highly regarded and integral part of the program.

The profile should also include the scores of any standardized tests such as the ACT. The Visiting Team reminds the school that these scores are indeed “available upon request.”

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The faculty and staff at Stillwater Academy believe parents are an integral part of the program and an essential element of the therapeutic process. Students live with families.

Stillwater is somewhat unique among special school programs, in that parents who have a child in the program (parents in Utah who live within driving distance of the school—some as far away as Grantsville) must accept a “foster child” into their families while their own child goes to live with another (“foster”) family. Parents are then responsible for the foster children, and they participate in training to better work with their new child.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

This has been described in Chapter 1, above.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Stillwater Academy's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

- Writing Ability—Students will express their thoughts and ideas clearly, creatively, and correctly using the written word.
- Complex Thinking—Students will acquire a variety of thinking skills and be able to use them in diverse situations.

Teachers and administrators spoke about indicators for each DRSL, but none were listed or explained in the self-study. The self-study points out that the process of selecting DRSLs was one of the most challenging aspects of the self-review. Stakeholders are commended for choosing two that are very pertinent, yet manageable. The self-study well explains the rationale for selecting these two.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

Stillwater Academy is to be commended for its collaborative effort. Since the school has only 12 faculty members, a “focus group of the whole” was established and committee members (i.e., all faculty members) met regularly as part of the self-study process. For example, in October 2004, teachers responded to a “trends questionnaire,” the purpose of which was to open discussion of issues affecting learning as part of the self-study work. Also, in March 2005, teachers brainstormed about their personal vision of where Stillwater would be in five years.

The school’s beliefs, mission, and DRSLs were a result of the collaborative approach. The mission statement describes a compelling purpose and direction for the school. It was developed around three major elements and keyed on the acronym SBI (see the mission statement at the beginning of this report).

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

This, too, has been well accomplished (see the list of beliefs at the beginning of this report). The school beliefs address key issues pertinent to effective decision making and policy development. It appears that the implications of the school’s belief statements and the level of the school’s conviction to act upon the beliefs were considered prior to finalizing the list of beliefs.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The mission and beliefs align as recommended by NSSE. The Visiting Team observed that the analysis of student learning needs takes into account the profile data and related assessment and evaluation measures of student learning. The expectations for student learning reflect meaningful and appropriately challenging goals. They are free of jargon, and all stakeholders can understand the clear and concise language.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The curriculum is based on the Utah Core, and teachers work together to meet and modify the core as needed for the school's unique population. The Utah Life Skills are a part of the curriculum. Standards for appropriate learning for the students' varying abilities guide the development of curriculum. There is no "packet learning" at Stillwater.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

See above. All faculty members concur in focusing on the school-wide DRSLs as part of their teaching assignment. All teachers, for example, integrate writing and thinking skills into their lessons. Beginning in August 2005, all teachers will be trained in the Six Traits of Writing program. This is the school's Action Plan #1. Action Plan #2, to be undertaken in August 2006, will train teachers in ways to incorporate a variety of thinking skills into their lessons. (See more on action plans in Chapter 5 of this report.)

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

Teachers have learned that they must be creative and innovative with this student population and help with the rehabilitation of students as well as their academic needs. Teachers are very much aware that instructional time must be protected and appropriately allocated to support learning. The Visiting Team encourages the teaching staff to continue and to improve this endeavor.

- b) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

The students engage in several appropriate "additional opportunities," such as sports and community service projects, as well as activities that directly support the curriculum. The school provides opportunities for students to improve and enrich their learning through expanded use of time, facilities, and instructional resources.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

The development of assessments of student learning is based on a clear definition of the type of achievement to be assessed and the performance standards for evaluating the quality of students' achievement. Assessment is both formative and summative. It appeared to the Visiting Team that assessments are fair and equitable. Teachers attempt to individualize assessment. Teachers and administrators pointed out that many types of assessment are used.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The Academic Director is a competent educational leader who understands the importance of promoting and fostering "quality instruction." She encourages decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and individualized. She, along with the other administrators (see the list in the front of this report), provides skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment. She constantly monitors the work of the teachers and checks on the progress of the students. Indeed, the school leadership promotes quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

As noted throughout this report, community building is part of the ethos of Stillwater. Positive and productive working relationships are established among students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. They operate as a family.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The school participates in community projects and service learning, which is an integral part of the program. Again, living in local homes and having the strong involvement of parents also fosters participation in the local culture.

Culture of Continuous Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

In-service will soon be offered that is directly related to the DRSLs and the action plan(s). This small school is to be commended for ongoing training of teachers.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The school is committed to progressive change. Of course, a principle concern is helping these youngsters with their personal problems in order that they may better achieve academically.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Standard I – Educational Program

Stillwater Academy meets all four sections of this standard. The educational program is aligned with the mission statement and beliefs. The Visiting Team observed that the vision for the school has been collaboratively developed. The instructional and organizational practices, as well as the policies and procedures, support the desired results for student learning and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society. The program of studies meets the requirements of the state.

Standard II – Student Personnel Services

All three sections of this standard are met. Personnel services are designed to give appropriate systematic assistance to students as called for in the subsections of the requirements. The assigned personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for each 400 students enrolled. The primary objective of the counseling program is to promote and enhance the academic and personal (behavioral) development of students and to prepare them for post-high school experiences.

Standard III – School Plant and Equipment

This standard is met. The new facility provides for a variety of instructional activities and programs and incorporates aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere. It provides for the health and safety (one of the listed beliefs) of students and all school faculty and personnel. The Visiting Team was familiar with the former school and is duly impressed at the benefits offered students at the much-improved new facility.

Standard IV – Library Media Program

The school meets the five sections of this standard. The school library media program is an adequate resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support, and contributes to the achievement of the DRSLs. Two certified library media teachers (part-time consultants who are very experienced) have provided instruction on library improvements. The Visiting Team observed said improvements. Sufficient funds are provided each year to meet the library/media needs of students and teachers. Ongoing upgrading of the library is a principle objective of the administration and faculty and one of the four action plans.

Standard V – Records

This standard is met. Student records are maintained, handled, and protected in the best interests of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)

The five sections of this standard are met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school. Systematic analysis of data regarding the performance of students has been incorporated into the comprehensive school improvement process, as has ongoing examination of instructional practices. The plan is updated and adjusted each year in alignment with perceived needs.

Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the state of Utah, and are endorsed or properly temporarily exempted for the subjects they are teaching.

Standard VIII – Administration

This standard is met. The administration of Stillwater provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary and required administrative procedures.

Standard IX – Teacher Load

This standard is met. The total number of students instructed by any one teacher in any one grading period does not exceed numbers set by the Utah State Office of Education and/or NAAS.

Standard X – Activities

This standard is met. The school supports a range of activities that supplement and augment the basic instructional program by providing additional enriching experiences for students consistent with the school's mission and beliefs. Attention is paid to providing equal opportunities.

Standard XI – Business Practices

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds. The school's advertising and promotional literature are completely truthful and ethical.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

It appears to be commendable and understood by all stakeholders. There is school-wide commitment to the action plan(s), and follow-up procedures are sound. The Visiting Team assumes that the plan will achieve the desired outcomes. School personnel intend to change and modify it as needed. The Visiting Team observes that the NSSE handbook was consulted as a model for formatting and for alignment with the DRSLs (first two action plans).

Stillwater has four action plans—two directly treating the DRSLs and two more that deal with other pertinent issues. Concerning the DRSL action plan, the NSSE recommended format is to have complete alignment (profiling—establishing beliefs—mission statement derived from beliefs—analysis of how the school is operating—establishment of DRSLs based on profiling, mission and beliefs—an

action plan that addresses the DRSLs). Stillwater Academy has accomplished this in Action Plans #1 and #2.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends all personnel and students for their hospitality and cooperation with the Visiting Team.
- The Visiting Team commends all personnel for their honesty concerning the academic programs at Stillwater and for their evident strong willingness to improve.
- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for their enthusiasm and apparent devotion to improving the lives of the students (i.e., for their commitment to the mission statement and beliefs).
- The Visiting Team commends the administration, therapists, and faculty for holding regular meetings to discuss all aspects of the ongoing program of the school.
- The Visiting Team commends all school personnel for their effort to tailor programs to the specific needs of each student (and, where necessary, design IEPs), for providing opportunities in service learning, and for fostering a nurturing but goal-directed atmosphere.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration for supporting quality in-service for teachers.
- The Visiting Team commends the school and therapists for working so closely with parents and with one another.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for including (at such a small institution) students in the focus group.
- The Visiting Team commends the emphasis, under the new academic director, on improving Stillwater and coming into complete compliance with the standards of NAAS and Utah.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school profile in future self-studies offer even more information and data (see Chapter 1).
- The Visiting Team recommends that all personnel continue their quality work as a team on all aspects of the program.
- The Visiting Team recommends that indicators be listed for the DRSLs (i.e., “proofs” of accomplishment of the steps leading to the desired outcomes).
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to track and follow up on students’ lives after they complete the program.

Lastly, the school is reminded that accreditation provides reasonable assurance about the quality of opportunities available to students who attend the school. A primary purpose of accreditation is to protect the public trust. Accreditation promotes voluntary self-regulation, and is a means of showing confidence in a school’s performance (i.e., showing that both quantitative and qualitative standards have been established). An ultimate objective of the self-study and accreditation process should be that schools institutionalize the process of reflective inquiry and thereby become internally responsible for the maintenance of standards—even the creation of standards. The Visiting Team anticipates that Stillwater Academy will continue the process of self-evaluation and ongoing improvement.